

THE LEISURE HOUR.

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Cooper.*



BACK TO THE VENTA.

THE HOUSE OF DE VALDEZ.

CHAPTER IX.—THE FRIAR IN THE CASA DE VALDEZ.

It was a great day in the old house in La Moreira, when Rosada and her duenna returned from the shepherd's feast, and with them the long-absent Henrique. Don Bernardo forgot his ancestors for a time in the joy of welcoming back his handsome, dashing nephew. Donna Natella ceased to recall the triumphs of her youth for the same happy occasion. They had both attained to such a settled conviction

of his wealth that they made no particular inquiries on the subject, and Don Henrique was in no haste to enlighten them, having taken precautions to spare himself that trouble for some time by engaging Antonio Diaz to send an immediate supply of all things necessary for the ill-provided household. The distance between the proud hidalgo and the prudent merchant had diminished wonderfully in the course of their journey from the venta of San Juan to the city of Cordova. Master Diaz had shown such a proper sense of the affront put upon the De Valdez

family by Captain Digby, entered so completely into the superior prospects opening before the entire house through the patronage of Donna Constanza de Fonseca, that Don Henrique forgave his resolute refusal to receive the friar into his house—particularly as he had thereby a better apology, or, as the don thought, a right, to exact tribute, and Father Crispano had intimated, by a civil message at the moment of starting, that it was not convenient for him to join the caravan, but he might be expected to appear at the Casa de Valdez in a very private manner, and execute the donna's commission without annoyance to any of its inmates. His absence made peace between Don Henrique and Jacinta. The young man believed that she would get over her hostility by the time the friar presented himself; the old woman imagined that her enemy had been frightened off the field, and by tacit agreement Father Crispano remained unmentioned. By a more distinct compact, it was arranged between the brother and the duenna that little should be said regarding Count Eduro in the hearing of the old pair at home, for whose wisdom neither of them had much respect, and Jacinta said, with a sigh, that the less he was spoken of the child would forget him the sooner, she hoped.

So Don Henrique's home-coming was pleasanter than could be expected under the circumstances; the pinching poverty of the luckless household was relieved for the time; the returned nephew told them all tales of his travels and adventures, the greater part of them redounding to his own glory, and kept everything in the background that might dispel the bright illusion of his fortune being made. He was ably supported by Antonio Diaz. The cautious, calculating merchant had an illusion of his own, and was acting under it, though scarcely aware of the fact. It made him send to the Casa de Valdez supplies that overwhelmed Jacinta with astonishment, and reduced his managing sister, Catalina, to despair. It made him take every possible occasion and excuse to call and inquire for the family; it made him seek private opportunities of learning from Don Bernardo's housekeeper—who, to do her justice, was never backward in telling him—what delicacies were most pleasing to the young señora. Had he not been permitted to assist Rosada from the mule-litter at her ancestral gate, when in all Spain, as he well knew, none but a near kinsman or betrothed lover would be allowed to touch a noble lady's hand? Antonio Diaz was dreaming, in spite of the grey hairs with which his head was sprinkled. Romance had come late to him, but it was romance, nevertheless. The youth lost in care and calculation had sprouted up in his heart again, as a plant cut down in spring will send up green shoots at the summer's end. But Antonio's dream had the effect of making him serviceable to the house of De Valdez, and Don Henrique was so well pleased with that result, that he returned all the merchant's civilities in fair words and professions of esteem, paid a visit of ceremony to him and his sister at their house in La Juderia, and privately confided to Antonio his project of marrying Donna Leonora Guzman if nothing better turned up.

There was peace and something very like plenty in the Casa de Valdez, or rather the end of it occupied by the family, but the peace at least was not destined to continue. One morning, when Antonio's messenger was delivering the accustomed tribute into the careful hands of Jacinta at the private gate,

a figure glided in before she could prevent it, and the Capuchin Father Crispano took possession of one of the deserted rooms in the middle patio of the mansion. Her loud demand for his immediate exit or expulsion brought Don Henrique and the entire household to the spot, and a stout tongue battle was the immediate consequence. Jacinta being in the greatest force, obtained a decided advantage; but the enemy was not to be driven off the field. They had all an interest in the friar's peaceable abode within their walls, and each in their own fashion endeavoured to bring the housekeeper to terms. Don Bernardo exhorted; Donna Natella coaxed; Rosada entreated, and, for once, entreated in vain; Don Henrique scolded, threatened, and finally informed her that she was not the master of the family, and Father Crispano must and should remain. But he had not reckoned on the truly Spanish stuff of which his uncle's housekeeper was made. With or without reason, Jacinta chose to hate the Capuchin, and for those whom she hated life within the same four walls with her was not a pleasure. For the friar to sit at the family board and share the family meals was simply impossible. Jacinta solemnly announced her intention of throwing everything movable at him in case he attempted the like, and following up the attack with a kettle of boiling water. As for evacuating the citadel to the enemy, or even withdrawing from the scene of action, it was contrary to Jacinta's principles. She had come into the house with Rosada's dead mother, and there she would stay; she had sat with the De Valdez family, and there she said she would sit, in spite of all the Capuchins in Spain. Even to Don Henrique she was too useful a person to be summarily dispossessed, so Jacinta had her own strange way; she had sworn to give the friar neither bread, wine, nor water, and few vows were more rigidly kept; but she had not sworn against giving him abuse, and of that liberty Jacinta availed herself to the utmost. His shadow crossing the court, or his step coming down the stair, was a signal for her to sally forth with a running fire of those opprobrious epithets in which the Andalusian dialect is so rich; wolf in sheep's clothing was the mildest she deigned to employ. Her design being to reduce his garrison by famine, she not only kept her own vow religiously, but insisted on every one in the house keeping it too. Don Henrique, with his drawn sword in one hand, might have given sustenance to the Capuchin with the other, but that last scion of his noble race did not attempt it, and nobody else dare except Rosada.

The gentle, thoughtful girl had grown more silent and pensive than was her wont since her return from the shepherd's feast; she had brought home a sad memory with her, the memory of a first love lost, and a first hope shipwrecked.

Rosada did not speak of Count Eduro, the injunction not to mention his name was needless as far as she was concerned; her nature was of that deep kind that keeps in silence its most earnest thoughts, and names its most lamented losses only in prayers. She did not believe her brother's explanation of his disappearance. Without Don Henrique's opportunities of knowing the man, her nobler instinct enabled her to estimate him more justly, and the dark experience of her own family, connected as it was with the peculiar institutions of Spain, made her suspect that some mysterious and terrible fate had overtaken him. The thought added a deeper gloom to the cheerless

and isolated life of that forsaken house in which her youth was shut up as by an icy barrier, parting her from all in which the young delight. She had no friend, no companion there, no congenial pursuit to help her over the great chasm so suddenly opened in her path; but in the midst of her own heart's mourning, Rosada had sense and charity enough to do what she could for the friar. He had been sent into the house by the necessities of his employment and the commands of his powerful patroness; he was poor, according to the vows of his order; he was old, and had no one to take his part effectually against Jacinta. Rosada knew that her mother's duenna would not raise hand or tongue to her, but she went about the business with great prudence and privacy, getting ready provisions in the quietest manner, and watching for opportunities when the housekeeper was occupied and out of the way to convey them to Father Crispano, who thus never wanted, though he lived in a manner by stealth.

The patriarch in the land of Uz scarcely displayed more patience under his manifold afflictions than did the Capuchin under the varied attacks of his enemy in sackcloth. Her wars with the family for permitting his presence in the house called forth no remonstrance from him, except with Don Henrique, when there was danger of the young soldier attempting to carry matters with too high a hand. He heard her torrents of abuse as calmly as if she had been sounding his praises; he made no endeavour to reason with, much less to rebuke Jacinta, and the only notice he took of her hostility when the crazy soul had worked herself into more than common fury, was to retreat up a stair or along a passage, according as his way in the great empty house might lead. Up the stair or along the passage Jacinta never pursued him. With her hatred of the friar there mingled from the first a strange, unexpressed fear, and the latter feeling gradually extended itself to the rest of the family, for Father Crispano had strange ways of his own. The business which brought him to the Casa de Valdez he diligently followed, copying the illuminated inscriptions and their beautiful Arabesque borders, the wreaths of flowers and interlacing foliage with which Moorish artists had decorated the walls of its dusty and long-deserted chambers, day after day; and carefully packing up his draughts and sketches for transmission to Toledo by the post or courier who came and went in Donna Constanza's service, and carried her commands and correspondence between north and south. He slept beside his work, after the Moorish fashion, Christian friar as he was, on a piece of carpet and a cushion which he had brought under his arm and spread on the floor of the great saloon where rank and wealth had revelled, or the latticed chamber, which beauty had made her bower.

These were the scenes of the friar's labours; but he also appeared to have business in corners of the house where there were no inscriptions or Arabesque borders to copy. Below that ancient and Moorish-built mansion there were extensive and numerous vaults, granaries, stores, and some said dungeons, which the De Valdez family had never used. A comparatively small suite of these subterranean apartments serving them as wine-cellars, the choice wines stored up there by successive generations in which the dons of the De Valdez line had forgotten their cares and celebrated their festivals, had gone the way of all confiscated things, and none of the house-

hold in the back patio cared to venture below the ground flat; but the friar did. They saw him emerging from the ends of passages and the tops of stairs leading down to the vaults, at all hours, with a small antiquated lamp carefully concealed by the sleeve of his gown. In the silence of the night they heard unaccountable noises as of picks or hammers at work far down in the Moorish dungeons, and Jacinta insisted that they were produced by the friar and the evil one, labouring together for the destruction of the casa, if not for that of the whole city. Father Crispano had also a habit of disappearing for two or three days at a time. Occasionally Jacinta would see him go out, and then her grand endeavour was to bar up every gate and mode of entrance, and keep them fast against his getting in. More than once had the hostile housekeeper congratulated herself on having bolted out and so got rid of the enemy, when, to her utter astonishment and dismay, she saw him quietly crossing the middle court, or at work in one of the adjoining rooms.

These singular doings did not allay her hatred of the Capuchin, but they considerably increased her fear, and lent a darker shadow to the gloomy life of the family. The age was possessed by the belief and dread of witchcraft, which indeed flourished more fatally in the northern than the southern lands of Europe; our own England had a heavy share of it, but it was known in Spain also. The De Valdez family had been brought to their present estate by a charge of sorcery, practised by their head and within their walls; and it was not wonderful that they should be impressed by the peculiarities of Donna Constanza's secretary, though he wore the cord and cowl. The impression troubled them all but Don Henrique: he had the man's refuge, out of doors, and he took it. In all the public places of Cordova, where rank and fashion displayed themselves, and idleness lounged away the time, as it can lounge in the south, Don Henrique was to be seen. His handsome face and figure, his air of travelled ease, and yet of high birth and breeding, made him a man of mark on the Alameda; dons exchanged civilities with him, and donnas exchanged glances, beside the fountains and beneath the palms. In the Plaza de Toros he sat as a connoisseur of bull-fighting, and none were more liberal of praise and approbation to the successful matador; in the theatre he applauded the plays of Lope de Vega, which that marvellous dramatist was then bringing out at the rate of a new one every fortnight; and in the coffee-houses he appeared as a man of taste, disputing over the merits of different biographies of Don Quixote, which the imitators of Cervantes were publishing in all directions: there being copyists on the earth in those days to overwork a literary vein as well as at present. Don Henrique also inquired after and serenaded sundry Cordovan heiresses; but as no flowers were dropped from the window in token of the fair listener's approval, and no chair was sent out to him—the unvarying sign of family encouragement to a Spanish lover—he gave up that unprofitable pursuit, and betook himself to another quarter where there was a better prospect of turning his abundant leisure to good account.

About three leagues east of the city, in a fertile valley which pierced deep into the skirt of the great Sierra, there stood the Casa del Donna, a Spanish manor-house of good Gothic build, surrounded by a small but well-cultivated estate, which owed its name

—in English, the lady's house—to the fact that it was the residence and undisputed property of Donna Leonora Guzman, a far-out branch of the great family who ruled in Sidonia, and second cousin of Don Henrique's aunt, Natella. To the Casa del Donna he set forth one morning, mounted on his Andalusian barb, with cloak and sword, hat and plume, all new for the occasion: Antonio Diaz had of course advanced the money. A letter requesting leave to pay his respects to Donna Leonora had been sent with fitting ceremony, and graciously answered, and Don Henrique rode into the courtyard with all his artillery of courtesy and compliments, ready to do execution on the lady's heart. The wheat-fields, vineyards, and olive groves around were flourishing and full of busy labourers. The courtyard was full of poultry. One sturdy damsel was feeding them, and two of equal power were grinding wheat on the primitive mill, from which the Iberian and the Roman had his flour long before Goth or Moor sowed or reaped the fields of Spain. Through a latticed window Don Henrique could see a group of women spinning steadily within, and through a half-open door another group engaged in making the hard goats'-milk cheese of the province. Industry and thrift were evidently the rules of the Casa del Donna, but it was not without its share of Spanish etiquette. One of the grinding damsels left the mill and led Don Henrique's horse to the stable; she that fed the fowls laid down her dish and conducted him with great respect to the grand sala or reception-room, kept sacred from all feet but those of the most distinguished visitors. Its massive and quaintly-carved furniture, its Flemish tapestry and open cupboards filled with silver plate, had been the pride and joy of Donna Leonora's great grandmother, whose dower house the casa was in the time of Queen Joanna, and they remained unaltered since her day.

While Don Henrique was gazing curiously on their antiquated and well-preserved grandeur, and also making a rough estimate of the wealth contained in the open cupboards, a tall woman, with a considerable development of muscle and bone, and clad in a well-worn gown of black velvet, with an embroidered stomacher, entered, followed by one much less and much older, with an equally aged gown of black silk, hastily bundled on, and with dripping wet hands. The tall woman made a remarkably stiff curtsy; Don Henrique made an exceedingly low bow, for his eye and his memory recognised, as unchanged by the passing of ten long years, his aunt's cousin, Donna Leonora Guzman. She was a lady of discreet age to be unwedded and out of a convent in southern Spain, for Donna Leonora had seen her thirty-fifth summer. Never having any beauty for time to spoil or take away, the years had passed harmlessly over her square face and muscular frame, which were at least worthy of the Gothic ancestors in whom she gloried: "We are not kings, but we are Guzmans," being the family proverb most frequently on her lips.

But the years had not passed fruitlessly over her house and domain. Ever since they came into her possession, at the early majority fixed by old Spanish law, namely, eighteen—for Donna Leonora had been an orphan in the guardianship of her distant and powerful kinsman, the Duke of Medina Sidonia—she had laboured with great diligence and success to economise and increase the produce of the land and

the wealth of the mansion. Had all the hidalgos of Spain followed her bright example, poverty would not have been so frequent an accompaniment of the blue blood as it appears to be in modern times. Donna Leonora never forgot that she was a Guzman, but the recollection did not in the least interfere with her counting the poultry, making sure that her maids spun their allotted tasks, and seeing that her labourers did not receive more than their legal allowance of oil and vinegar, bread and salt. There was no wasteful relaxation permitted in her well-ordered house on holidays and festivals; her servants had leave to go to mass, but any other sort of entertainment was out of the question. Company she considered unseemly for an unmarried señora; the wine produced by her vineyards was to be sold, not drunk. One of the richly wrought cups or goblets displayed in those open cupboards mortal lips had never drained since they came under her jurisdiction, her own festive bowl on the highest occasion being a silver rimmed horn, which she insisted had belonged to Don Roderic, the last of the Goths, though her household whispered that she had bought it cheap from a hard-up gipsy. The neighbouring farmers and traders reckoned Donna Leonora the best bargainer in that part of the country. Except when the plague was supposed to be approaching the province, the priest of the parish had some trouble to get his dues out of her fingers. She acknowledged the De Valdez family to be her relations, but kept no correspondence with them, partly because she and Don Bernardo could never agree regarding the height of their respective pedigrees, and partly because, being poor, they might ask or expect something out of the Casa del Donna.

A lady of such independent fortune and powerful management did not remain single for want of suitors among the discerning Cordovese. But Donna Leonora understood her own worth. Rank or riches was her ultimatum, and as none of the sighing swains possessed either requisite to a sufficient amount, she continued in "maiden meditation, fancy free." As nobody in Spain visited a single lady, except for the purpose of courtship, Don Henrique's call was a great event in her quiet and careful life. He had the required rank, in spite of the Inquisition; for what could efface the blueness of blood when it rose to the tint of De Valdez? Report had informed the donna that he had returned from his ten years' sojourn in America a handsome and dashing soldier, and she took measures accordingly. The black velvet gown and embroidered stomacher, inherited from her grandmother, and assumed only on the most solemn occasions, her usual dress being the coarse brown cloth of the country, and rather scantily made, was donned the moment she saw him enter her gate. The donna had been spinning like Lucretia among her maids, but it was at wool greased with as rancid oil as the whole south at midsummer time could afford; ablution formed no part of her toilette, except on Saturday night, when, according to the legend, the angel of darkness had a valid claim to the unwashed who did not happen to dwell within convent or monastery. Moreover, garlic was the only condiment allowed in her house, and most liberally used by herself, so when armed for conquest, the donna brought with her an atmosphere of her own. It would not have been etiquette for a Señora Guzman to receive a male visitor, even at thirty-five, without a duenna, and as it was expensive

to keep a regular official of the kind, old Barbara the dairy woman was brought from cheese-making to act in that capacity.

Thus fortified, the donna appeared before her new admirer, and their conversation was of a most courtly character. "At your feet, lady," said Don Henrique, "it completes the happiness of my life to see you increasing in health and beauty."

"I kiss your hand, sir knight, your goodness exceeds my poor deserts," said Donna Leonora; and so the pair, seated at the opposite sides of the room, went through the whole ritual of compliment and reply which the long-winded politeness of old Spain had made and provided for such occasions. Before they had quite reached the end of it, old Barbara, who sat, as in duty bound, in the middle space between them, gave sundry signs of impatience, and at length reminded her mistress, in a pretty loud whisper, that if she did not get back to the cheese it would certainly be spoiled. Thereupon Don Henrique rose like a caballero complado, and craved pardon for consuming so much of Donna Leonora's precious time. Beauty, he remarked, made even great kings forget discretion. He also craved leave to call again and be blessed with another sight of her, and the pardon and the leave being graciously granted, the grinding damsel brought his horse out of the stable again, and he rode away.

Donna Leonora ran to her bower (it was not an extremely elegant one) to get off her velvet gown and embroidered stomacher, and put them carefully away in her grandmother's chest. Old Barbara made equal haste to lay aside her robe of office. The donna went back to her wool-spinning, the duenna went back to her cheese-making, and all things went their wonted way in the thrifty household, except that the maids thought their mistress must have found a suitor to her mind at last, for she said young De Valdez was a credit to the province, and the only man to her knowledge worthy of a discreet lady's hand, if he could only get back his father's estate.

Meantime the ardent suitor, having reached a rising ground at some distance, paused and looked back on the flourishing fields and well-stored mansion. "She is an excellent manager and an admirable housewife," he said to himself; "never spends a ducat on any woman's finery, I'll be bound. A man could cut a figure on her gatherings, and she would keep everything in good order at home; but what a disenchanting piece she is, and how she smells of rancid oil and garlic! Well, well, a gentleman in my position has no choice! I am tired of poverty, and must marry her, if nothing else turns up, or Donna Constanza can't be induced to do something for us." Then he thought of the strange ways of Donna Constanza's secretary; of the ill-fortune that had followed his family; of his sister's late disappointment and his own concerning her, till at the top of the valley his eye wandered up the wild slopes of the Sierra (how far the eye can wander in the clear southern air!) and all at once, as if seized by a sudden impulse, he turned from the road to Cordova, galloped up the nearest of the mountain paths, and never drew bridle till he reached the venta of San Juan.

The shepherd was out with his flock, but the shepherd's wife sat spinning in the porch, and the shepherd's daughter sat by her side making lace. Gulinda was particularly clever in that delicate art, which the Moors are said to have introduced into Spain. They were rather surprised to see Don

Henrique, after the mood in which he had left the venta; but Don Henrique had got time to cool and consider. What he knew of Edward Digby made him doubt the truth of his first impression, probable as it seemed from the circumstances of the case as related by Lope Mendez. Every remembrance he had of the young and gallant captain, so generous in thought and action, so scrupulous in honour, so noble in his conduct towards himself, forbade the unworthy conclusion. He blamed his own hasty judgment and more hasty wrath, particularly as they had brought him a quarrel with Lope Mendez, a rebuke from the friar, and an angry dispute with his family's best friend, or at least follower, the old shepherd Elasco. So Don Henrique had come to make up matters and to see if any intelligence had been gained of his lost friend.

Dame Pedrina made him welcome, as if nothing had happened to disturb the good and long-standing relations between the Casa de Valdez and the venta of San Juan. She gave him the details of the fruitless search; she showed him the sword which poor Lope had found, and on which he also recognised the Digby crest and the captain's initials. The shepherd, with his men, and Lope among them, came in to their mid-day meal. Elasco, as well as his wife, would have forgiven anything to a De Valdez, and any diplomatist in a difficulty might have envied the tact and address with which Don Henrique contrived to forget all that had passed of an unpleasant nature. The young Biscayan's surprise was beyond concealment, but justice was done to the character of his lost master, and he was ready to stand by Don Henrique against all comers. Gulinda was the only one in the family who did not make much of the reconciled young noble; she kept her eyes fixed upon her lace when Don Henrique wanted her attention to himself. His admiration of her work, which delighted Dame Pedrina and charmed even the wise old shepherd, brought no increase of intimacy. Gulinda laid down the lace and the cushion before him and retired to a remote corner herself. Talk of her friend Rosada was the one thing that interested her sufficiently to converse with him at all; but when he pressed her in the most friendly and delicate manner to come on a visit to the Casa de Valdez, and delight not only Rosada but the entire family, she looked first at the window then at the door, as if thinking through which she would make her retreat; and Dame Pedrina, with many apologies for her shyness, reminded him that Gulinda was a mountain girl, and had never been in the town except with her father when he went to pay his dues at the Casa.

There was no news of the lost Digby to be got, but Don Henrique had made his way clear to the venta on the mountain, as well as to the mansion in the valley, and he continued to visit them both. His suit to Donna Leonora was carried on as it began. He went to see her in gallant state, and she appeared in her grandmother's velvet, with old Barbara fresh from the cheese or butter making. Don Henrique assured her that his happiness depended on her smile, and his heart was beneath her feet; but he kept the opposite side of the sala with great precision, and when the interview was over, and the velvet being put by, he rode away to San Juan de Roca. The shepherd, the shepherd's wife, and Lope Mendez, got a high opinion of his devoted friendship to the lost Eduro, so frequent were his comings to inquire for news or trace of him, though he still

inquired in vain. What the shepherd's daughter thought on the subject she never expressed; perhaps the young girl could not, the case was too vague for words; but she avoided his company and converse with a persistence that did honour to her resolution. His appearance on the mountain side was a signal for her to seek immediate occupation in some out-of-the-way corner, and when not so timely warned, she generally contrived to steal away to some of her own shady haunts in the farm or the pasture, when he was seated with her father and mother. Had she any thought of Don Henrique really being her admirer? The chasm between their respective ranks was too wide to be bridged over in any legal or honourable way. Nobody was more conscious of that fact than the last of the De Valdez line. No dower of beauty, no nobleness of character, could make the shepherd's daughter worthy to be his bride. He was not a man to harbour evil designs against the peace and honour of the faithful Elasco's family; he would not have owned the like to his confessor; but Don Henrique was forgetful of his duty to Donna Leonora. Gulinda's pleasant face and artless manner could not but attract him.

Her father and mother did not miss the girl when he sat with them. She led a free and somewhat lonely life in the safe mountain land, roaming the valley and the pastures beyond as unchecked or unquestioned as the wild bird or the fawn, sometimes in search of a favourite lamb or kid, prone like herself to wander, sometimes in gathering rare herbs and simples for dyeing or medicinal purposes, according to mountain lore, in which she was singularly skilful for one so young, and sometimes, as it seemed, for the mere love and pleasure of being alone with nature. There was many a nook beside the mountain streams and in the pasture dingles where she used to sit on mossy stones or old tree roots shaded from sun and sight by the thick foliage and clustering blossoms of shrubs that are deemed the ornaments of our northern gardens, but grow wild on southern hills. Latterly, Dame Pedrina thought her daughter spent more time in these lonely haunts of hers than could be well accounted for. Had Gulinda any visitor that she did not fly from there? That was the question that crossed Don Henrique's mind. The mountain pastures were strange to him, but frequent visits to San Juan made him understand their outline. And what will an unemployed man not do for his folly or his jealousy? He determined to watch the shepherd's daughter, or get a fair opportunity to have a talk with her.

On that purpose bent, he gave the good people at the venta to understand one day that they might not expect to see him for some time on account of pressing business, with which he would be occupied in Cordova, and the very next rode up the mountain for a convenient distance, fastened his horse to a shady palm, and proceeded on foot up the bank of a stream in the direction of which he had more than once observed Gulinda steal away. The fierce summer heat, which scorches every green thing even on the slopes of the Sierra, had not yet set in, and the bright wild waters were now flashing in the sun and now lost in the shadow of thick embowering shrubs and tall plants with crowns of bloom. The step of young De Valdez was light, and his figure half-hidden by the shade, but they were caught by an expectant eye and ear.

"You are come early to-day, but I have learned

my lesson," said a sweet young voice, with joy in its silvery tone; and one glance showed him that the speaker was Gulinda, seated in a bower of wild myrtle, with an open book of strange characters on her knee.

"Have you, indeed?" said Don Henrique, darting into the bower. Gulinda bounded from her seat, and would have rushed past him, but he caught her by the kirtle. At that moment something seemed to spring upon him from behind, and before he could stand on his defence, the powerful young man found himself hurled into the stream, and his first look as he scrambled out of it, half-drowned, rested on Father Crispino, the Capuchin friar, whom he had believed to be at that very hour copying away in the Casa de Valdez.

"Art thou not ashamed, thou graceless knave, with the habit and name of a gentleman, to come here like the wolf after the lamb, and that lamb, too, the innocent daughter of thy family's most faithful follower in their time of need? Fie upon thee," cried the Capuchin; "and all the while thou art making suit to Donna Leonora Guzman for the sake of her wealth. Is it not evil enough to cheat one woman into marriage by false professions, but thou must come to tempt and trouble a simple, good girl, who cares not for thee?"

"Hark ye, father," cried Don Henrique, turning furious, in spite of all his prudence and fear of the church, for he saw Gulinda smiling, not on but at him, as she stood behind the friar; "I should like to know what right a holy man has to use his hands as you have done, taking one off his guard, too, and then to give me lectures as if I were your servant."

"Thou art the servant of Satan; but listen," said the friar: "keep out of the mountain pastures, if thou settest any value on thy life, for the shepherd shall know both thy doings and thy intentions towards his daughter, who, let me tell thee also, came here to meet no one, but only to learn a lesson which I assigned her in this pious book. Come, Gulinda," he continued, drawing the girl's arm into his own, "we will go home to thy father's house together."

Don Henrique's thoughts were of a stormy nature as he walked back to his horse, and then rode back to Cordova. First, he resolved to slay Father Crispino on the earliest opportunity, then he considered it best to accuse him of something to the Inquisition; next he wondered where such an aged man found strength enough to fling him into the stream, and that recalled all the friar's odd ways in the Casa de Valdez, and all the strange things he had heard of him.

THE NEW LAW OF BANKRUPTCY.

THERE is probably not a single honest tradesman, merchant, or dealer in any kind of merchandise, carrying on business in this country, who has not had just occasion at one time or other to exclaim against the Bankruptcy laws, as they have existed under various modifications for the last half-century or more. In very old times the law was cruelly severe against bankrupts, often punishing mere misfortune as if it were crime, so that men who had been guilty of nothing but misplaced confidence suffered grievously for the wrong-doing of others. Then came the in-

evitable reaction—the over-stringent laws were repealed and new ones enacted as lax as the abrogated ones had been severe. The change, it was averred, was conducive to the facilitation of commerce and the spread of commercial activity. This may have been true, but it was only a part of the truth, and ignored the shady side of the subject. As the law and the administration of it grew more lax, cunning and unprincipled traders devised the means of evading it, and bolder men crushed through its meshes, and made its very provisions subservient to their nefarious designs. Legislators tried their hand from time to time at reforms, but, as if afraid of dealing roundly with a matter so vital in a trading community like ours, they contented themselves with patching, cobbling, and remodelling, and succeeded only in complicating a system which needed nothing short of entire reconstruction. Meanwhile the unavoidable consequences ensued. As the penalties and the social disgrace of bankruptcy grew less, multitudes dared the risk of it, who under a just law would have shrunk from the responsibilities of business. At almost any time during the last thirty years it has been easy enough for any man who could obtain credit for goods, or who could get his bills endorsed by a friend, even though he had not a farthing of capital of his own, to start in business and try his fortune in the business world. If a man thus rashly speculating succeeded in establishing himself, so much the better for him; but if he did not, and fell into the yawning gulf of insolvency, so much the worse for those who gave him credit. Of late years—and during periods not so very late—experiments of this sort have grown so common, and the utter and ruinous failure of the experiment has grown so common also, that commercial honesty seemed in danger of becoming the exception rather than the rule. Everywhere among traders of integrity and standing the cry grew louder and louder against the leniency of laws which left them a prey to reckless and needy rogues; and on all sides rose the clamour for the abolition of abuses patent to all the world, and the enactment of a just law in the interests of fair and honest traders. It was quite time that such a demand should be heard and complied with. For want of such legal resources as would have secured even-handed justice between debtor and creditor, the commercial morality of England has sunk to a disgracefully low level.—while shoals of “lucky rascals” who ought to be undergoing the punishment of their misdeeds are revelling prosperously on the fruits of their plunder. Worse still, there has existed for years past—and that in a flourishing condition—a race of legal practitioners, whose profitable occupation it has been to nurse the crippled or malingering defaulter through the sickly stages of insolvency—to whitewash him at the cost of his creditors, and restore him to society, to begin the game anew. This they could do, and did do, unless their printed advertisements were lies, without subjecting the amiable and interesting object of their case to the least unpleasantness, by simply embowering him in some agreeable rural seclusion, away from the assaults of importunate creditors, during such time as the legal ceremonies were “put through.”

The new law came into operation with the month of January in the present year. Never was an enactment anticipated with greater interest, never was the operation of any statute having relation to commerce preceded by such startling and instructive manifestations. All that class of speculators who dabbled in the exciting contingencies of insolvency and its mani-

fold phases—who made their market by the facilities heretofore available for clearing off old scores or new ones by the act of compounding or smashing up when it suited them, were stricken aghast by the provisions of the new Act. All that other section who were trading on artificial credit without any basis of solid cash, saw, as they perused the several clauses of the statute, that the ground was about to be cut from under them. Numbers whose eventual break-up was certain, though they had imagined it at an indefinite distance, saw it now advancing portentously into the foreground; and numbers more who neither knew nor much cared how their affairs stood, were compelled to look into them, and to face conclusions the reverse of flattering. To all these persons the day which saw the new law in force would assuredly be the day of reckoning, for it would shift them from the state of the gambling “welcher” to that of the responsible trader, and endow them with liabilities which they had never entertained the slightest idea of incurring. How little the cunning, the underhand, the shaky and the shiftless trader relished the coming change might be seen, during the latter months of 1869, by a single glance at the “Gazettes” issued during that period. The columns were crowded with the shoals of insolvents’ names increasing in numbers with each succeeding issue. One might have imagined bankruptcy to be something extremely honourable and delightful—such racing and chasing, such hurry and drive, such squeezing and crowding was there from all quarters towards the bankruptcy courts. In truth, it must have been a serious crisis for not a few, and it may well be that many an honest painstaking man may have found himself driven against his will to take advantage of an opportunity that was never again to recur. For every one of the multitude of shopkeepers who rushed in such desperate haste to the refuge of the bankruptcy court at the close of last year was perfectly awake to the fact that the day of indulgence would soon be past—that the knell of twopenny-halfpenny dividends had sounded—and that henceforward, if they would do business at all, they would have to do it “fair and square” on an honest footing.

There is not a little that is suggestive in the spectacle afforded by that sudden rush of all and sundry into the arms of bankruptcy as to a shelter and a sanctuary, as the critical time drew near. How many bold and promising enterprises must have been nipped in the bud, or suddenly blighted in their growth! How the “Happy Jacks” of the commercial haunts, whose hearts on their sleeve are as good as a balance at their bankers’—the men who “have at all in the ring,” who play at commerce as at a game at cards, and, pocketing when they win, forget to pay, when they lose—how all this high-soaring tribe must have been taken aback by the provisions of the new statute which so remorselessly crops their wings!

Let us look at some of the provisions of the new law, and forecast as briefly as may be the results of their operation in the days to come. In the first place, we may state that it will no longer be in the power of debtors who may have matured arrangements for that purpose to bring their predatory schemes to a consummation by making themselves bankrupts, and thus setting their creditors at defiance. On the other hand, the new law enables creditors to a small amount to combine together when they find a trader playing an unfair game, and compel him to bankruptcy whether he like it or not. A provision

this, which, if prudently used, will put an end to many a losing or ill-considered speculation before large or ruinous loss is incurred, and prevent the running of absurd risks at the expense of creditors. In the next place, the old red-tape machinery by which the property of bankrupts was supposed to be realised by official assignees, under whose clever management the assets were made, sometimes after the delay of years, to yield the creditors but trifling dividends—all that ingenious mechanism so elaborately complicated by the limbs of the law is done away with. In future the assets of the bankrupt will be at the disposition of the creditors, and the dividends will be distributed among them by agents of their own appointing, and over whom they will have control. Practically this provision transforms proceedings in bankruptcy, in so far as the creditors are concerned, from a mere financial farce, pleasant chiefly to the lawyers, into an ordinary business affair bearing substantial results. Better still: the new law insists upon the payment by every bankrupt of at least ten shillings in the pound of his creditors' claims. Unless his estate pays a dividend to this amount he will not obtain his discharge; and though he should resume business without such discharge, any property of which he may afterwards become possessed may be seized and appropriated in satisfaction of the creditors' outstanding claims until each has received in the whole ten shillings in the pound. It is a pity, we think, that this clause in the Act cannot be made retrospective, seeing that we could put our finger on so many highly respectable people who have wiped out enormous demands at the rate of five, three, two, even one shilling in the pound, and who would be made morally so much more respectable than they are if only they could be prevailed on by any means to fulfil obligations none the less binding that they date very far back.

Other provisions there are of an analogous kind, too numerous for detail.* One, however, must not be passed over, and that is the clause which prevents the fraudulent settlement of property upon members of a bankrupt's family or upon his friends. This practice has been a favourite resource of villainy in times past. There are hundreds of families of pretentious social standing whose original independence was founded on funds withdrawn from business and set apart by fraudulent settlements on wives or children—which funds could rightly be regarded only as so much plunder, seeing that they ought to have been applied, and would have been applied if the parties had been honest, in discharging obligations incurred with the view of further gain after the settlements were made.

It is pretty certain that the new law, like the old ones, will be evaded whenever such evasion is possible, and we need not expect that it will work at first without considerable friction. But on the whole we see no reason to expect anything but good results from its operation. It will assuredly lead to the exercise of more caution by persons embarking in business, and to more carefulness in the conduct of it. It will tend to diminish the number of headlong, uncalculating speculators, and to make young men more wary and deliberate in the assumption of financial responsibilities. Concurrently it will diminish the number of insolvencies, and the loss to the

whole trading world accruing from bad debts. If it acts in this way, we may reasonably look for fairer methods of carrying on trade—for the cessation or abatement of the wild conflicts of competition in which traders ruthlessly cut each other down for the sake of clearing ground for themselves; and for a return, in some degree at least, to the old-fashioned systems of commerce, and especially of shopkeeping, under which men thought less of cutting a figure in the world, and were duly impressed with the disgrace of figuring as a bankrupt in the "Gazette."

THE PENINSULA OF SINAI.

BY JOHN KEAST LORD, F.Z.S., NATURALIST TO THE EGYPTIAN EXPLORATION EXPEDITIONS.



BEDOUINS ENCAMPED.

CHAPTER V.—OUR FIRST JOURNEY INTO THE DESERT.

HERE, perhaps, will be the better place to briefly notice the Sinaitic Peninsula, over some part of which we are about to journey; and it is not in any way untruthful to say that, whether considered geographically, geologically, or archaeologically, it is one of the most interesting and remarkable districts on the surface of the globe.

Bounded on the east by the Gulf of Akaba—the Eilat Gulf of the Greeks; westward by the Gulf of Suez—the Arabian Gulf of the Greeks; northward by Gaza, and north-eastwardly cut off from the great interior regions of Arabia and Syria beyond the Jordan by the Dead Sea—is Arabia Petrea, or, as it much more correctly is called now-a-day, the Peninsula of Sinai. Its extent of territory, roughly speaking, about equals Sicily, and its shape is that of a triangle, the apex terminating in the Red Sea. Its

* For further provisions of the Act, see "The People's Guide to the New Law of Bankruptcy." Houlston and Wright, 65, Paternoster Row.

mountainous regions are more or less centrally placed, constituting the nucleus, as it were, of the entire district. In physical outline, the westernmost side of the peninsula, from Tor on the south and Suez on the north, may be described as a series of flats or table-lands of varying heights up to the ridge of Sinai, about the highest point of the country. These table-lands have been eroded and cut away into valleys—some of which are deep and very tortuous—by the action of water. The plains are broken and their general level disturbed by numerous peaks and ridges, which are generally the undenuded edges of dykes of intrusive rocks which, being of tougher material than the granite and schists containing them, have bid defiance alike to wind and storm, as the inequalities are due to outlying deposits of sedimentary material. All the main valleys are called Wādys, although the same term is applied to any small hollows cut out by the action of the winter floods.

I know of no word in the English language which conveys so wide a meaning as that expressed by the Arab word wādy. It is used to designate a deep valley, a shallow cutting made by the winter torrents, a hollow, a gully, whether long or short, crooked or straight, wide or narrow, of recent origin, or the result of ages of water fretting. Some peculiarity in the rocks, or the presence of sweet water, or more often the prevalence of some tree or herb, has suggested to the Bedouins a name for the wādy or the mountain wherein or whereon such herbs or trees may be found. The names that follow are familiar examples of what I mean—Wādy Sufsāfeh, "Willow Wādy;" Wādy Sidri, "Wild Thorn Wādy;" Wādy Abu-Hammad, "The Father of Fig-trees Wādy;" Wādy Taiybeh, "The Wādy of Sweet Water;" Jebel um Shaumur, "The Mother of Fennel Mountain:" many more instances might be cited, but these will amply suffice. A most marked feature, geologically speaking, is the vast plateau or table-land known as the Great Desert of the Tih, or the "Wilderness of the Wanderings." A ridge of rather lofty hills skirts its northern boundary—a ridge the traveller cannot well fail to notice as he gazes desert-wards from Suez: these are known as the mountains of Rāhāh. The sandy part of the peninsula is chiefly confined to the plain of Ramleh, which is placed about 1,750 feet above the sea level, and is approximately about twelve miles in width, from north to south. The entire plain is completely covered with sand, which is continually blowing and drifting about like the lightest snow. Northwards it is bounded by the huge escarpment named Jebel Tih, which extends to Wādy El Arish and Palestine. The mountains of Tur on the eastern and north-western sides of the peninsula run down so very close to the sea as in many cases to leave not even sufficient room to pass between the rocks and the water.

Through the canal-like branches of the Red Sea, the Gulfs of Akaba and Suez, which wash two sides of the triangle, Sinai may be said to obtain communication with the whole world. From the summit of most of the higher mountains in the peninsula the sea can be distinctly seen if the atmosphere happens to be clear, and I can hardly recall to my mind a more singular effect than this glimpse of blue water has upon the general features of the landscape.

A great deal of work had to be accomplished before everything was satisfactorily arranged and we were quite ready to start from Moses's Wells.

The water-casks required to be thoroughly staunch, in order to preclude any chance of leakage. We took with us eight casks made of wood, iron-hooped, and each cask contained, when filled, about twenty gallons of water. Two casks filled formed a load for a baggage-camel. These casks answered fairly well, but after being emptied, when a day or two elapsed before it was possible to refill them, the intense heat of the sun, together with the extraordinary dryness of the atmosphere, so quickly shrank the wood, that leakage was the certain result, hence a tedious delay was necessitated, whenever any watering-place was reached, to soak the casks, in



YOUNG BEDOUIN CAMEL DRIVER.

order to saturate the shrunken staves. If this precaution was neglected, the chances were that you found only empty casks on arriving at the next camping ground.

From very considerable experience I strongly advise persons travelling through the desert, whether in pursuit of pleasure or exploring for scientific purposes, to provide themselves with wrought-iron "drums" instead of wooden casks; each drum should contain twenty gallons of water. Well-made screw taps should be nicely fitted into the ends of the drums, and these taps should be constructed so as to be worked with a key; four strong iron rings should

likewise be riveted to the side of each drum, so that they can be easily roped and slung from the camel saddle. Having a key to the tap, which key should also fit a screw to close the hole through which the drum is filled, puts it out of the Bedouins' power to take water from the drum so long as you or your dragoman retain possession of the key. A plug can at any moment be taken from out a water-cask; and a Bedouin, according to my own experience, has not the slightest particle of honesty, or any scruple whatever in the matter of obtaining water; if he can get it, no matter how, he will; though it were the very last cupfull left in your cask or water-skin, I am firmly persuaded that a Bedouin would not hesitate an instant to drain it, leaving you to do as best you might to save your own life. I am free to admit that the water becomes, especially when travelling, extremely hot in the iron drums, but so it does in the wooden casks. The drums cannot be stove in or plundered, and the casks can, so that the former are decidedly the better means of conveying water on camel-back. I have lately tried the iron drums for camel transport in Nubia and Abyssinia, and found them to answer admirably. When you are going to encamp, all you have to do is to make the camel-drivers build up close to your tents two small piles of stones, or mounds of earth will answer equally well, and on these supports place a water-drum, in the same manner as you would "horse" a cask in a cellar; this done, the water can be drawn by giving your dragoman or servant the key, without any waste, and no thieving can be carried on. Filtering and cooling the water adds very greatly to the health and comfort of the traveller. I found a strong earthen filter, enclosed in a stout wicker basket, to answer capitally. A gallon filter kept clean will run down as much water as a party of four or five are likely to require for drinking purposes, and the water can be readily cooled in porous earthen bottles, called "*tukhehs*." Failing these, take ordinary wine-bottles, fill, and either wrap them in nannel, or better still, place them in old stockings, and then hang them up to the tent-cords in the sun. The wrappers must be kept saturated with water, and I venture to say you can cool the water to within a few degrees of freezing point, with the sun at 135 deg. Fahrenheit. Your claret, if you have any, will be none the worse for this kind of treatment.

Besides the casks we had a number of water-skins, and it may be useful to point out that there are two kinds of water-skins employed when travelling with a camel train. The larger skins are called "*rei*," these are generally made of ox or buffalo hide, and hold from ten to twelve gallons of water. The water is poured in and out at one end of the bag through a long leather neck, which can be tied firmly when the skin is full, like the mouth of a grain sack. The smaller skins are made from the hides of goats: the skin, first of all, is carefully divided across the hinder part of the dead goat, and then stripped off nearly entire, being only cut close above the hoofs; these four leg holes are firmly tied, the openings caused by the eyes, ears, and mouth securely sewn; and, finally, the skin is prepared by "dressing" to form a water-bag; finished, it is called a "*kerbeh*." A wide leather strap is affixed to the "*kerbeh*," with which it is either carried on a man's back or slung from the camel's saddle.

It was necessary that we should obtain our first

supply of water from Suez, as none could be obtained until we reached Wady Gharandal, and the water from any of the wells of Moses was too salt to be either wholesome or palatable. Our live stock of poultry inhabited large crates, the crates being secured upon the backs of steady camels when travelling. The morning came in due course that was to see us depart from our first encampment to bend our steps desert-wards. Our tents struck, I wandered over to see the baggage-camels packed, and, as usual, the riot and confusion (that was at its height when I arrived) baffles all description. If the Bedouins were noisy and quarrelsome, the camels were ten times worse, for they roared and rampaged, every one of them, as though they were being subjected to the most frightful tortures.

Exposed to the full blaze of an Eastern sun that, as I stood still, made the perspiration stream from out every pore of my skin, the wrathful Arabs tugged at the halters and struggled with the roaring camels, vainly striving to make the refractory beasts lie down to be loaded. Often, after a prolonged and obstinate battle with its Arab masters, a camel was forced down upon the ground to receive its burden, and as often, when the load was only half put on, up it dashed, and, jumping viciously, scattered everything to the four points of the compass. One camel was especially chosen, as being particularly docile and quiet, to carry the lanterns before referred to. This valuable freight of glass, carefully packed in a huge crate, was, after a great amount of trouble, secured upon the back of this extremely gentle camel; but, by some unlucky fate, just as the freighted animal was getting up from its recumbent position, three or four fowls contrived to escape from their prison, placed on the back of another camel near by, and fluttering they scarce knew where, tried to find a resting-place upon the neck and back of the bearer of the lanterns. Whether rage or fright, or both, got the better of the camel's usual gentleness, or whether her good nature was suddenly transformed into an evil one, I am not able to say; in any case, off the beast went, more like an intoxicated locomotive than a steady-going "ship of the desert," jumping, whirling, roaring, and kicking, until nearly every lantern was dashed into fragments, while the crate which contained them was being towed along over the sand, like a small boat in the wake of a steamer. Hotly pursued by the Bedouins, the runaway camel was at length captured, but even then so great was its fury that it did its best to strike down any person within reach of its front feet, and, unluckily, so far succeeded in its vicious desires as to fell one Arab to the ground—a blow that laid the poor fellow up for several days.

Time and patience at last conquered all difficulties, and one by one the camels slowly moved away, and in a long unbroken line shaped their course desert-wards, guided by their swarthy Bedouin masters. The men we had with us rode, some on camels specially provided for the purpose, others on the baggage-camels with the lightest loads. It was my turn now to vault on to the back of my riding-camel, and, for a wonder, the beast was pretty amiable, and roared only a very little; and now we were fairly away, our route was toward Wady Sûdr, and thence to Hâwârâh, or Mârâ, as it is supposed to be by many travellers.

NATURAL HISTORY OF DRESS.

III.

WOOL CLOTHING.

WE now take up the materials of wool clothing, commencing with wool. The term wool, though vague, admits of no popular substitute. If we were to say wool is the hair of sheep, that would not quite do, remembering that certain breeds of sheep grow hair not at all woolly. Again, the Thibetian cashmere goat, the lama, the alpaca, and other animals, grow coats that are woolly in every popular sense. Even certain breeds of oxen have occasionally produced so much unquestionable wool that some naturalists have thought care in breeding might have developed coats worth shearing. The fact seems to be that, speaking of wool, one should import his own limitations. By wool then, present purposes regarded, I choose to understand the crisp, soft, and wavy hair of sheep that have grown up in companionship with man: which have become dependent on man, and are, as we may put it, "civilised" or "cultivated."

Naturalists are not quite in accord as to the origin of sheep; but so great a preponderance of opinion refers our tame wool-bearers to the wild argali that we may as well accept the hypothesis. From whatever wild animal derived, the domestic sheep must have undergone profound changes, as any one acquainted with sheep farming and tending would attest. Many of our reclaimed animals, if turned loose under favourable conditions of soil and climate, would shift very well for themselves. The horse and the bovine tribe would do so, for example, as they frequently have done; take the case of South America. Otherwise is it with sheep. Were a flock of these animals turned loose, under the most favourable conditions of soil and climate, only a small minority could bear up against the troubles that would await them. For example, the fleece we value so much as wool is liable to be infested by flies, the ova of which, except dislodged by man's care, would come to life and eat the sheep. If by chance a small remnant of the flock escaped, then probably natural causes would induce a growth of hard, wiry hair, very different from the wool so much in request for the making of various garments.

The utter helplessness of reclaimed sheep, the animals which dot our pastures, producing our wool and mutton, has led Monsieur de Buffon to suppose that sheep were reclaimed by man from the wild state so very early that no vestiges of the wild parent stock remain. Monsieur de Buffon was a very elegant writer, but in some cases his imagination ran away with him. This naturalist made great mistakes about whales, making them at least five times as long as they are, and the common opinion is that his opinions about sheep are not more trustworthy. When Monsieur de Buffon wrote, the effects of domestication in modifying the characteristics of animals were not so well known as now. Guided by modern experience and analogy, the probabilities are much in favour of the descent of reclaimed sheep from the argali.

These animals have a wide natural distribution. Throughout the whole Asiatic central range they are to be met with. In Kamtchatka they are found, and even so near at home as Corsica they run wild in the mountains. When we reflect on this wide distribution now, it is reasonable to imagine it was

once still wider—that in some regions man reclaimed them, whilst in others man allowed them to run wild: an hypothesis that well accords with the extensive distribution of sheep in early times as testified by history. Adopting this view, one cannot fail to be struck with the wonderful and most beneficent design of Providence, that hair should change to wool under circumstances of domestication, just when wool would be wanted for the needs of attire. Even now the quality of wool is subject to much variation as to length and softness. Occasionally in the very highest breeds of wool-bearing sheep, hard stiff hairs obtrude themselves amidst the downy fleece and deteriorate the product, the hard hairs in question being known to wool-staplers as kemps. Whatever the breed of sheep we may have to deal with, the wool is obtained in two different ways. It is either shorn from the living animal in summer time, when nature's great-coat is a trouble and embarrassment, or it is scraped and cut away by the fellmonger from the skins of sheep already dead; such as the butcher has converted into mutton, for example. Fellmongers' wool-pelt wool, as it is called, is ever an inferior staple. In living sheep, as summer heats increase, the whole fleece becomes pervaded with a greasy, or rather a soapy, matter, known as "yolk," and which appears to take no inconsiderable part in keeping the wool soft and silky. At any rate, if the quantity of the yolk be defective in a live fleece, the indication is unfavourable. Such a fleece grows hard and harsh; and let the manufacturer do what he will, hard and harsh it will remain until the very end. When once the fleece has been shorn away, the presence of this yolk is undesirable, by setting up a fermentation with heat, under the influence of which the quality of the wool deteriorates. Previous to sheep-shearing it is our English habit to wash the wool-growers, each sheep being caught separately, then borne in a man's arms into a pond, where the process of washing is gone through systematically. Whether this manner of purification is the best that could be adopted, even in our climate, is a point in dispute, but for the cleansing of sheep in hot climates it is incompetent. There, so much greater is the accumulation of yolk that mere pond-washing of live animals fails to remove it; accordingly, in Spain from time immemorial, the washing has been performed on the shorn fleece. Partly from this cause, but more especially from peculiarity of the Merino breed of sheep, Spanish wool has always borne a very high character. However, Saxon wool is now better. It is the growth of Merino sheep naturalised in Saxony. In the reign of George III of England the experiment was tried in England. It was one of the pet schemes of his Majesty, who found coadjutors in Lord Somerville, Sir Joseph Banks, Dr. Parry of Bath, and others. The experiment did not turn out so well as had been hoped. Not only did the Merino fleece deteriorate in our climate, but John Bull could not relish the Merino mutton. The importation of Merinos, however, was not without its good effects in another way. Though the pure breed of Merino sheep did not suit us, certain excellent cross-breeds were established in which the combination of mutton with fleece was well carried out.

British wool production was formerly the highest object of national trade solicitude. Whilst the Romans held England British wool was considered to be the very best in the world. The Greeks and Romans, but more especially the latter, were very choice as to the wool they used for attire. Before the invasion of Britain the Romans set high value on a breed of sheep called the Tyrrhine for their wool-bearing qualities. Spanish wool was also in high esteem at Rome, as was wool of the Coraschi, a people of Asia. After the invasion of Britain, however, the Romans preferred our wool to all other, holding it in such high esteem that they established a cloth manufacture at Winchester for the use of the emperors. At the present time the character of British wool is not so very high; indeed the probability seems to be that on the whole the quality of British wool has deteriorated, mutton being of more consequence than wool, and the acquisition of both in the highest degree of excellence being, it would seem, impossible. British self-conceit in respect to wool has at various times led to the enactment of laws designed to advantage British interests, but which really were injurious. At one time no British-grown wool might be exported, at another no foreign wool might be imported. In various ways British wool was taken under legislative care—the most extraordinary enactment being that every British corpse must go to the grave in a shroud of British wool. This was an obligation that many now living can remember.

The heat-preserving qualities of wool must have been a matter of early observation, and the primitive way of using it as an article of attire was in its natural state of attachment to the skin, a method still retained by many people who would not like to be called savages. The Russian Moujik, for example, protects himself in this way from the elements, and, save on the score of uncleanness, no good objection can be brought against it. One variety of sheepskin—that of the Astrakan sheep—is pretty extensively used by well-to-do people. The wool is very short, curled, and soft. It would almost come under the designation fur, and is more to be regarded as a material for edging, trimming, and turning up of garments than as a material of heat-retaining attire. Astrakan skins are all of lambs, wool of the grown-up sheep being deficient in curly softness. The rule holds good for most races of sheep, that lambs' wool is softer than wool shorn from the parents. In the Merino breed, however, the rule is reversed, which also holds good for certain other breeds. At one time Astrakan skins were fashionable here in England for the collars of gentlemen's great-coats and cloaks, also for ladies' muffs and feet-warmers, but one does not see much of it in England now. Sheepskins with the wool on are said to have constituted the almost universal attire of the ancient Britons, before their conquerors the Romans introduced the wool-working arts. The Romans, as I have said, were critical in the matter of wool, as would indeed appear from their taking the trouble occasionally to clothe choice sheep with skin garments, to promote the growth of delicate wool underneath, and to keep the fleece clean.

It is a fact that, in proportion as a breed of sheep is more neglected, more wild—more nearly approximate to the original stock, so do the fleeces tend to blackness. Considering, then, that woollen cloths have to receive dyes, one can easily understand how any deviation from white must be a serious defect. In

sheep-breeding, a sort of canon has been arrived at to the following effect:—Wool corresponds to paternity, mutton to maternity. On this canon of art, sheep-breeders regulate their stock so as to eliminate the black sheep as much as possible. However good or bad a fleece in its entirety may be, there exist in the same fleece several recognised grades of excellence. For this reason the sorting of wool is an important part of the woolstapler's function. In English practice seven or eight or even more selections are made, to each of which a special trade name is given. The classification of wool on a Spanish fleece is not so elaborate, three varieties only being recognised, viz., *raffinos*, *finos*, and *terceros*—or as we may translate it, refines, fines, and thirds.

After colour, softness is the most important quality; and up to this time nobody seems to know to what this is attributable. On theoretical considerations it might be supposed that coarseness or fineness of wool-hairs would constitute the difference, but practice disproves the assumption. For example, under the microscope examined, the softest varieties of wool are not always found to be made up of the smallest hairs. Something would appear to be due to the quantity and quality of the yolk or natural soap, but considerably more to the nature of the soil on which sheep graze. Thus the fact seems tolerably well established that sheep grazing from a soil rich in lime produce hard wool. Microscopic scrutiny proves that the usual range of variation for the diameters of individual hairs of wool is from one eight-hundredth to one thirteen-hundredth part of an inch.

A still more important microscopic demonstration is the following, viz.: Each individual fibre of wool is serrated; in a way very comparable to a barley beard, the saw-like teeth all looking one way. This configuration might almost be inferred without microscopic aid by drawing a filament of wool between the finger and thumb. Treated thus, it will be found to run more easily one way than the other. This peculiarity finds a most important application: one without which neither could the wool bodies of hats be made as they now are made, nor could woollen tailor's cloth be produced dense, hard, and close of grain. The serrated configuration enables wool to be felted, as the operation is called, condensed into a tenacious mass—a tabular mass, if we please, like the body of a wool hat or a piece of felted druggut. Who discovered this process of felting or when, it is impossible to state. Folks are constantly discovering certain processes, and this is one—discovering it sometimes to their own dissatisfaction. What housekeeper does not know that her woollen mattresses become knotty after some use; feeling as if they were stuffed, not with cocoa-nut fibre, but actual cocoa-nuts? If she beats such lumpy wool mattresses, all the worse for individuals who have to lie on them. The more you beat such mattresses the harder they get. If we bear in mind the serrated form of individual wool fibres we find an explanation. Twining and inter-twining, the fibres coalesce into hard balls, the beating of which only promotes a tighter interlacement. If wool be spread out on a flat surface, then moistened with warm water and beaten, it felts into a tablet more or less thin according to the quantity of wool used, forming a sort of unwoven cloth. With tissue like this, certain eastern people manufacture their tent coverings; and in all probability felting is a process more ancient than weaving. The advantages of felting do not end with this primary application

of it, as we shall soon find. If instead of aggregating the wool fibres, whilst yet unwoven into threads, we spin yarns, weave those yarns into a texture, and then subject the tissue itself to a process of felting, then necessarily the effect would be to make the tissue denser and closer than when it came from the loom. This operation is called fulling, and really is no more than the felting of a woven woollen fabric.

This felting quality, so valuable in the production of certain textures, becomes a bad element in others. For example, having bought a pair of stockings to measure, one would be considerably annoyed to discover that after washing and pulling about they had become so small that one could not draw them on. This is what often happens, and the result is attributable to felting. Now it so happens—and this is a peculiar excellence of wool—that the felting quality can be destroyed by peculiar treatment. If wool be combed for a sufficient time with hot iron combs, then it no longer felts, and this for a reason which microscopic examination reveals. This hot combing process has the effect of tearing away the small saw teeth I some time back referred to, thus reducing the filaments of wool to the same mechanical condition as those of silk, cotton, or flax. I cannot in this paper give even an outline sketch of the various tissues into which wool enters. Some are made of wool alone, some of wool and cotton. Then the tissues made of wool alone admit of a trifold primary classification, namely, those which are partially felted; those which are, or ought to be, completely felted; and those which are not felted at all. Formerly a classification of wool prevailed which has lost much of its significance now—that, namely, of long wools and short. The former alone was considered fit to be combed, or *unfelted*, if I may be allowed to coin a word expressive of tooth removal. The progress of machinery, by enabling wools of almost all lengths to be used indifferently for all purposes, has done away to a great extent with the meaning that once applied to long wool and short wool.

Before I pass away from the subject of felting, it seems proper to remark that the quality, though possessed by wool fibres in the highest degree, is not their exclusive prerogative. To a certain extent varying with each sort, all hair fibres have the quality of felting. The hair of camels and dromedaries—which indeed is almost woolly—stands very high in this respect. So does hair or fur of the beaver.

INSTINCT AND REASON.

IV.

EXAMPLES of the intercommunication of ideas between animals of different races have, it is believed, been very rarely recorded. The subjoined one is from an eye-witness. An old mare, relieved from hard work in consequence of the infirmities of declining years, was turned into a field in company with a cow and several heifers. The pasturage in this field being of very indifferent quality compared with the rich crop of grass and clover in the one adjoining, longing eyes were cast by the animals on the tempting food from which they were debarred, and many attempts made to break through the intervening fence, which at some points was not in the best repair. One day the mare was observed to make a regular tour of inspection round the enclosure, evidently, as the sequel shows, to discover the most

favourable place for escape. Having ascertained this to her satisfaction, she returned to her companions, and requested the cow's attention by tapping her gently on the shoulder, first with her hoof, and then with the head. The cow then followed her conductor to the invalided part of the fence, and the pair having attentively surveyed it together, went back for the heifers, after which, the old mare setting the example, the rest followed her over the gap, and found themselves (literally) "in clover." It would not be difficult to translate the quadruped ideas and language here into our own tongue. First, we may suppose the reflection of the old lady to be something like this: "The vegetation in that field looks particularly rich and good; it makes one's mouth water. I'll just go round and see if there's no way of getting in." Then, having discovered the suitable spot—no selfish desire to leap the fence-unobserved, and feast, like Jack Horner, all in a corner by herself, but—"I'll go and tell the cow, and bring her to look at the place." This done, the two consult together, and agree that "it will do very nicely; but we mustn't leave these poor young things in the lurch; they must share in the feast; let us go back for them." If these were not exactly the reasoning processes that took place, the initiatory movements and final result lead us to conclude that they must have been very similar.

In our school-days we made acquaintance with a Newfoundland dog, whose knowledge of the value of money and careful provision for his future wants, were familiar to a large circle of admirers and patrons. He belonged to a clothier, and the entrance to his master's place of business was furnished with a couple of doors, some six or eight feet distant from each other, the outer one always being open in the daytime. On a large mat between the two was his constant post; he rarely, if ever, was absent from it except for a few minutes at a time, when he went to supply himself with provisions at a baker's shop a few doors off, at the corner of the street. Many were the halfpence saved from marbles, barley-sugar, toffy, and even from our daily allowance for lunch, which we bestowed upon the great, sagacious-looking creature, for the pleasure of seeing him walk to the baker's, and lay out his money in a biscuit. Sometimes we were disappointed of our amusement, for, if not at the moment hungry, he would take the coin and hide it under his mat, where, according to schoolboy report, he had a fabulous amount (for a dog) of coppers, and from which he abstracted a penny or a halfpenny at a time, according to the state of his appetite. He knew perfectly well the difference between the coins, and their relative value; and that he was entitled to receive two wine-biscuits for the larger sum, and only one for the halfpenny. We have given him a penny, and seen him enter the shop and permit the attendant damsel to take it out of his mouth, but instead of accepting the two biscuits offered him, he stood still, looking gravely at her as if something were wrong. This behaviour was intended to signify that he only wanted a single biscuit on that occasion, and wished for the change out of his penny. Now and then he took a fancy for a French roll by way of variety; at such times he would "make no sign," and preserve a fixed impenetrability of countenance on the presentation, first, of the couple of biscuits, and then of a biscuit and a halfpenny; then his desire was understood. The people of the shop were, as may be supposed, accus-

tomed to his ways, and able to interpret his mute expression; and as anxious to please him as if he had been a "regular customer" of the human species. After leaving school, I was told by more than one informant worthy of credit, that if you gave him a sixpence and accompanied him to the shop, he would receive the change, and then allow you to take it out of his mouth, satisfied with his two biscuits, and apparently quite conscious that so large a sum was never intended to be given him at one time. We never knew what became of the balance of his day's receipts, at bed-time—whether his owner took care of it for him, and laid it out in new collars and mats as the old ones became worse for wear, or whether he slept upon it, and guarded it. It was almost impossible that, unless gifted with an uncommonly elastic appetite, and a strict vegetarian to boot, his expenditure could have equalled his income. Poor old fellow! he was not a handsome specimen of his race, but "handsome is that handsome does" says the old proverb; and his intelligence and amiability made him a general favourite with the *habitués* of the well-frequented thoroughfare. He died long ago, and was properly honoured by being stuffed and preserved. How he would have been perplexed, if he had survived to the days of the bronze coinage; clever as he was, it would have been some little time, we suspect, before he learned to distinguish between the old halfpenny and the new penny, so nearly of a size.

The following deliberate plan of retaliation, formed and carried out by a dog belonging to himself, is related by one who was a witness of the whole proceeding. The dog had been assaulted and bitten by another much more powerful than himself, and thinking that, in such unequal odds, "discretion" was "the better part of valour," he took to his heels and ran home. For several days afterwards he was noticed to put himself on half rations, and lay by the remainder of his food. At the expiry of this period he sallied out, and in a short time returned with a few of his friends, before whom he set his store of provisions, and begged them to make a good dinner. This being despatched, the guests took their leave, along with their entertainer, and followed by the dog's master, whose curiosity was excited. He watched their progress for a considerable distance, when a large dog marked out, by the leader to his companions, as the offender, was furiously attacked by them all, and well worried before he could make his escape. The self-denial persevered in by this dog with a view to his revenge, and his knowledge of the efficacy of a bribe, are very remarkable; and he must have explained to his friends the service expected from them in return for their dinner.

That the faculty of memory exists in animals, there are many proofs. Bees, according to Huber, who had been fed in the autumn with honey at a particular window, returned in expectant crowds to the same place in the spring, when the window, closed through the winter by an outer shutter, was re-opened. The recognition of their own hives, out of a number of others, on returning from their excursions, would appear to be from a remembrance of its situation, rather than from any peculiarity about the individual hive. Swallows, on returning from their winter quarters in southern latitudes, resume possession of their former summer residences. A horse will almost always be found to preserve an acute recollection of any spot where he has received a

fright, however many years may have since elapsed. We knew a pony in the neighbourhood of Ripon, whose nervous system was, as a rule, in the best possible state; but there was a certain ford which it never could be induced to cross, nor even to go within fifty yards. If you persisted in attempting to drive straight on, the invariable consequence was, that the creature suddenly whirled round as if it had been shot. It had once been startled there, years before,—it was thought, by the noise of a waterfall close by; and the impression seemed fixed in its memory. No objection was made to any other ford, though one, which it had occasionally to cross, was much wider and fully as deep as the one in question. This said pony, by the way, had one or two very singular tastes, a great liking for strong peppermint lozenges being the oddest; it would take them to any amount, and crunch them with unmistakable relish.

We cannot just now call to mind where we met, long ago, with a very amusing example of memory in a horse,—the charger of the commanding officer of an Indian regiment. He was an exceedingly large and heavy man, and the horse having a dislike to carrying such a burden, acquired the habit of lying down on the ground whenever the colonel prepared to mount. This, as may be supposed, annoyed him, and, to avoid the ridicule of the soldiers, he parted with the animal, and procured another not so fastidious as to a few stone more or less. We believe it was a year or two—certainly some considerable time—after that the colonel, visiting another station, was invited to review the troops there, and a horse was placed at his service, which, on his attempting to mount, immediately lay down in full view of the assembled regiment. It turned out to be the identical dismissed charger, who had at once recognised his former objectionable owner.

A very interesting anecdote is related by Frederic Cuvier, showing not only great power of memory, but also strong attachment in an animal generally supposed to be destitute of all good qualities—the wolf. A gentleman had trained up one from infancy till he was as tractable as a dog, would follow him about whenever allowed, and become quite low-spirited when he was absent. Being compelled to leave home, his master made him over to the *Ménagerie du Roi*, where he at first drooped and refused to eat, but gradually became more reconciled to the situation. After the lapse of a year and a half his master returned home and paid him a visit. The wolf knew his voice the moment he spoke, and flew to him with every demonstration of delight and affection, planting his fore-feet on his shoulders and licking his face. The same scene occurred after a second separation of three years' duration, the wolf, as before, at once recognising his master's voice, and bounding towards him as soon as set at liberty by the keeper. A final parting followed, and from that time the faithful creature never appeared to regain his former spirits and equable temper, occasionally indeed betraying ominous signs of the ferocity inherent in his race.

Stories of elephantine intelligence are numerous, but most of them too well known to repeat here. One, however, recorded by a traveller, in a paper contributed to a scientific journal, and which is vouched for from personal knowledge, is worth a brief notice. The author was on a journey, and several elephants were engaged to carry his tent and baggage. One of them, euphoniously named *Fâttra Mungul*, coming

on the scent of a tiger, was seized with a panic and ran off into the woods, the driver saving himself by clinging to the branch of a tree and letting himself down. All attempts to recover the animal were fruitless, and the party proceeded on their way, giving up all idea of seeing him again. Amongst a herd of wild elephants entrapped eighteen months afterwards was found the runaway, who at first was as uproarious and unmanageable as the rest; but on an old hunter who knew him well riding up to him on a tame elephant, pulling him by the ear, and ordering him to lie down, he immediately obeyed the familiar word of command and became perfectly tractable. This writer also mentions a female elephant which escaped from her owner and was at large for *fourteen years*. On being recaptured she remembered her former driver and instantly lay down at his order.

Locke adduces the learning of tunes as proof that birds are gifted with memory. "It cannot," he says, "with any appearance of reason be supposed—much less proved—that birds, without sense and memory, can approach their notes nearer and nearer by degrees to a tune played yesterday, which, if they have no idea of it in their memory, is nowhere, nor can be a pattern for them to imitate, or which any repeated essays can bring them nearer to. Since there is no reason why the sound of a pipe should leave traces in their brains, which not at first, but by their after endeavours, should produce the like sounds; and why the sounds they make themselves should not make traces which they should follow as well as those of the pipe, is impossible to conceive."

There is no question that many animals understand the measurement of time. It is a well-known fact that, on lands where the crows are habitually shot at, the birds, instead of keeping at a respectful distance, as on the rest of the week, come close up to the farmhouses on Sundays, having somehow found out that the guns are then shelved.

Mr. Bell gives the following instance as having fallen under his own knowledge. "A fine Newfoundland dog, which was kept at an inn in Dorsetshire, was accustomed every morning, as the clock struck eight, to take in his mouth a basket placed for the purpose, and containing a few pence, and to carry it across the street to a baker's, who took out the money, and replaced it by a certain number of rolls. With these Neptune hastened back to the kitchen, and safely deposited his trust; but what was well worthy of remark, he never attempted to take the basket on Sunday mornings."

Every one who has travelled much in Scotland, more especially in the Highland districts, must have remarked the large attendance of shepherds' dogs at church on Sundays. This peculiarity is very interesting to English tourists, one of whom states that he was told that many of the dogs were more regular attendants than their masters. This gentleman mentions that, in one parish, the animals, perhaps demoralised by a "black sheep" among their number, became so quarrelsome and unmannerly in their behaviour, that the minister requested all who had been in the habit of bringing their dogs, to confine them to the house before leaving for church. This plan answered exceedingly well for the first Sunday, but, for the future, not a single shepherd or farmer could find his dog on a Sunday morning. They had no notion of being deprived of their accustomed liberty, and, well knowing the hour of service, set off to church without their masters. An attempt

was then made to compromise matters, by erecting a large kennel close to the church, where the dogs were imprisoned during public worship, but they kept up such a fearful howling, that the congregation was seriously disturbed, and there was no help for it but to restore them to their former rights and privileges.

We happened ourselves, when staying in Ross-shire with a friend, to meet with a pattern church-going dog. It was a year or two after the conflict in the Scotch Establishment, which led to the foundation of the Free Church, and which, in the first heat of party, occasioned some unfortunate differences in family circles. It did not give one exactly an idea of unity to see husband and wife setting off in opposite directions to their respective places of worship, even though there existed the most perfect harmony of temper, as was the case in the household where I was temporarily located. But this by the way. I was going to observe that even the animals had their special predilections, two of the three Skye terriers being Establishment dogs, and attending their master to the parish church; the other we styled the Free Church dog, for he regularly attended the building lately erected for the secessionists, and where the lady of the house had her pew. The most amusing thing was that the little creature—the shaggiest, most intelligent-looking "Skye" I ever met with—always set off to church by himself, and punctually half-an-hour before the bell commenced to ring for service. The sight of him trotting leisurely along the carriage-drive was quite sufficient information as to the time of day, without consulting the clock. On reaching the church, we always found him soberly settled in the pew, and he invariably conducted himself with the strictest propriety.

Another specimen of clock-work regularity came under our notice in London, as exhibited in the person of a very large white tom-cat; white, that is to say, he was intended to be by nature, and would have been anywhere else but in the heart of the city smoke. As it was, his coat was of a dingy greyish, yellowish, indescribable tint. This cat came up every morning at seven o'clock to awaken the inmates of the house; mewing and scratching at one bedroom door till he received an answer, and then passing to another in the same way, till he had completed his round. He was very punctual, never being more than two or three minutes behind time.

We hope that the illustrations which we have brought together—a few out of many which could have been given—will interest the reader. We must leave him to draw his own conclusions.

The Sparrow.

"He providently caters for the sparrow."—*Shakspeare*.

A SPARROW lighted chirping on a spray
Close to my window, as I knelt in prayer,
Bowed by a heavy load of anxious care.
The morn was bitter, but the bird was gay,
And seemed by cheery look and chirp to say—
What though the snow conceals my wonted fare,
Nor I have barn or storehouse anywhere,
Yet I trust Heaven ev'n on a winter's day.
That little bird came like a winged text
Fluttering from out God's Word to soothe my breast:
What though my life with wintry cares be vex,
On a kind Father's watchful love I rest;
He meets *this moment's need*, I leave the next,
And always trusting shall be always blest!

RICHARD WILTON, M.A.

Varieties.

JEWISH BARONETS.—There are now four Jewish baronets. The first Jew made a baronet was Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, who received a baronetcy from Lord Melbourne's government in 1841. The next was Sir Moses Montefiore, who received his baronetcy from the outgoing Conservative government of Sir Robert Peel, in 1846. Sir Moses was the first Jewish knight, his knighthood having been conferred in 1837, on the occasion of his being one of the sheriffs of London when the then youthful queen dined with the lord mayor and corporation on the first lord mayor's day succeeding her accession. In the same year the Liberal government of Lord John Russell made Sir Anthony Rothschild a baronet, the baronetcy having first been offered to and refused by his eldest brother, Baron Lionel de Rothschild. Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, who, after becoming an English baronet, was made a baron by the Portuguese government, and usually adopted the foreign title (de Goldsmid and da Palmeira) in preference to the English designation, was succeeded by his son, the present baronet, Sir Francis Goldsmid, M.P., Q.C., who, with great good taste, elected to adopt the English title of baronet rather than the Portuguese title of baron. The fourth baronet is Sir David Salomons. It is very singular that these four baronets have no direct male heirs. Two are widowers. There is, excepting Sir Moses, whose knighthood may be said to have merged in his baronetage, but one Jewish knight, Alderman Sir Benjamin Phillips. The late great philanthropist, David Sassoon, was a Knight of the Order of the Star of India.—*Jewish Chronicle*.

PAPER PURCHASED BY WEIGHT.—When the price of paper is regulated by weight, the purchaser is liable to be defrauded. Mixing certain mineral dust with the pulp has long been a contrivance of dishonest paper-makers, and lately a patent has been actually taken out for mixing prepared iron filings with the pulp, in making coarse kinds of paper. It is added that "grocers will derive a great benefit from using it."—*Scotsman*.

KEEN EYE TO BUSINESS.—Just before Christmas we received by post an insurance circular, worth reproducing as a literary and commercial curiosity. We say nothing of the skeleton-at-feast and memento-mori character of such an epistle at such a season. The writer had no doubt a solemn purpose, as well as a shrewd eye to business; but the ingenuity of the first sentence is highly entertaining—"Dear Sir,—This being the season of the year when social relations are generally drawn closer together, it seems natural that, as the representative of a mutual office, the circular I send forth at this time should have a similar tendency. And I accordingly avail myself of this principle to remind members of the insurance company, as well for their own interest as for the welfare of the society, of the desirableness of using their influence with any friends contemplating life assurance, to effect their policy with us. And here, I cannot avoid observing, as a singular fact, that people are more careful to assure their houses and premises than their own lives, although not one man in a thousand suffers loss by fire, whereas *all* must inevitably die!" After stating the special advantages of this office, the circular thus ends:—"These render this society a very safe and desirable means of providing for families and dependent relations. And I will be glad to aid you in procuring new business, by furnishing you, or your friends, with forms, and with all further information."

GROUND OF FAITH.—Dr. James Hamilton, in his last illness, shortly before his death, dictated a solemn farewell to his congregation and his friends. After giving messages of love to all, he added, "If any inquire the ground of my confidence, it is not that I have been a minister of the gospel, or have been kept from some sins, for I feel utterly unworthy. My hope is in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and in that blood which cleanseth from all sin; and I wish to go into God's presence as the rest have gone—a sinner saved by grace—a sinner saved by grace."

DEEP-SEA WATER.—During the progress of the researches in the voyages of H.M.S. Porcupine, sea-water was brought up from various depths for chemical analysis; and attention was early called to the character of its retained gases. Near the surface it was found that the gas consisted of about 24 or 25 per cent. of carbonic acid, the rest being chiefly oxygen and nitrogen, but at greater depths the proportion of carbonic acid greatly increased, and reached 45 per cent. at 700 fathoms. After storms of wind, however, by which the surface of the ocean had been much agitated, the quantity of its carbonic acid was very much diminished. In one of the surface specimens

taken scarcely any was found at all, and its absence was at first set down to some error in analysis. Afterwards, however, it was remembered that this water had been dipped up from about the paddles of the steamer, and not, as usual, at the bow. The inference from these facts is that the agitation of the sea by storms, by liberating its superficial carbonic acid, and thus permitting the ascent of that which is constantly formed by the abundant animal life below, furnishes one of the conditions which render the continuance of that life possible. The inquiry into the sources of food for the deep-sea animals resolves itself into the single question of the maintenance of the globigerinae, or chalk animalcules. Directly or indirectly, all their neighbours can live upon them, but it was at first difficult to conjecture how they could live themselves. Professor Wyville Thompson has suggested that they may be supported by the organic matter diffused through the deep-sea water, and analysis has shown that such organic matter is present in considerable quantities, and in assimilable, as distinguished from decomposing forms. Besides the analyses conducted on board, some specimens of water were brought to Professor Frankland, and he has fully confirmed the conclusions that had been reached.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND.—The last list of Catholic priests in England and Scotland shows an increase of 37 since the corresponding time last year, the respective numbers being 1,690 at the end of 1868, and 1,727 at the present time. In the number of churches and chapels there is an increase of 25, being 1,354 this year against 1,329 twelve months ago. The communities of men are 69, and 67 last year, being an increase of 2; and the convents for women number 233 against 232 at the end of 1868, being an increase of 1. The ordinations to the priesthood have been, during the last 12 months, 69, against 63 during the previous year. Of those ordained in 1868, 56 were secular priests, and seven were regulars; and of those raised to the same dignity in 1869, 50 are seculars, and 19 are regulars. The greatest increase in churches or chapels, as well as in priests, made during the past year, has been in the diocese of Southwark, being 159, against 144, or fifteen new places of Catholic worship opened in one year; and also an increase of 17 in the number of priests.—*Weekly Register*.

PENNY DINNERS.—The following proportions serve for 120 dinners (pints) of Irish stew:—

Three 6lb. tins of Australian mutton	..	£0 10 6
Six pecks of potatoes	..	0 6 0
Six packets of pea flour	..	0 1 0
Three pennyworth of flour	..	0 0 3
Three pounds of rice	..	0 1 0
Carrots, turnips, and celery tops	..	0 1 0
Pepper and salt	..	0 0 3
		£1 0 0

The copper was set up in the school-yard, and those who liked ate their meal in the school. The vegetables and other articles are cheerfully given by all classes, so that by this means the "Penny Dinners" are self-supporting.—HENRY ABUD, M.A., Vicar of Uttoxeter.

LONDON FIRE ENGINES.—There are fifty fire-engine stations in London, with 110 engines, of which twenty-five are worked by steam. The *personnel* of the establishment includes about 380 men, and the annual cost is nearly £60,000. There are also more than 100 fire escapes, located at ninety stations. The protection of life and property from the ravages of fire, throughout the area of the metropolis, is a duty which devolved upon the Metropolitan Board some three years and a half ago. From that period down to the present time, the Board are understood to have been continuously and actively engaged in perfecting the arrangements and appliances of the brigade. A complete system of telegraphic communication has been effected between all the stations, so that the force may be readily concentrated at any required point. A practical advantage is also said to accrue from subjecting the fire escapes and the engines to one direction and control. Under these circumstances, the efficiency of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade would seem to be well secured.

SUPERSTITION ABOUT BEES.—A correspondent in Worcestershire writes: "We lost last season one of the stocks of bees. The whole swarm for some inexplicable reason deserted the hive, which was found full of wax, but nothing else. All our country servants declared it was because we did not put the hives in mourning, tying black crape over them, at the death of a relative shortly before."

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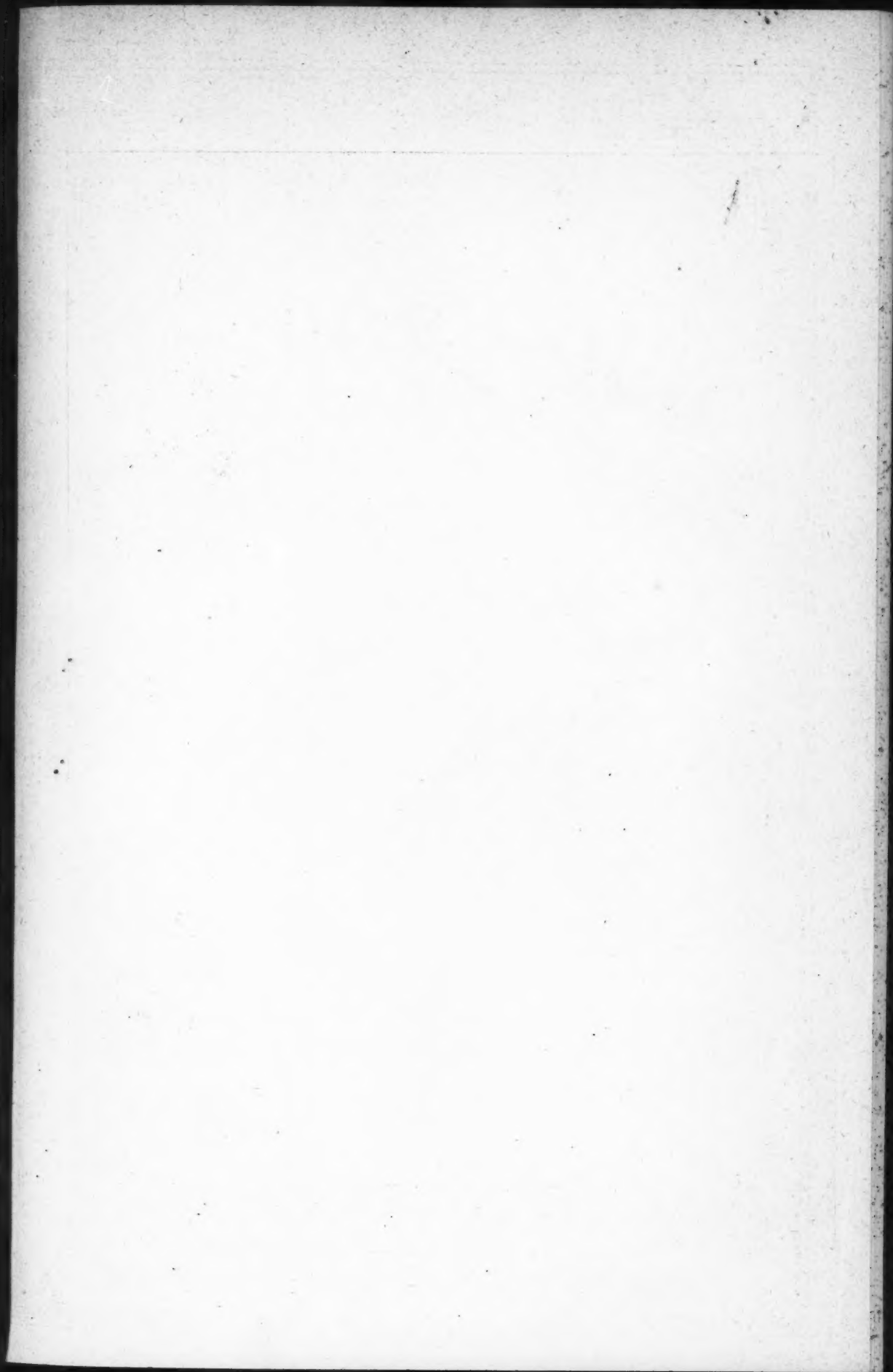
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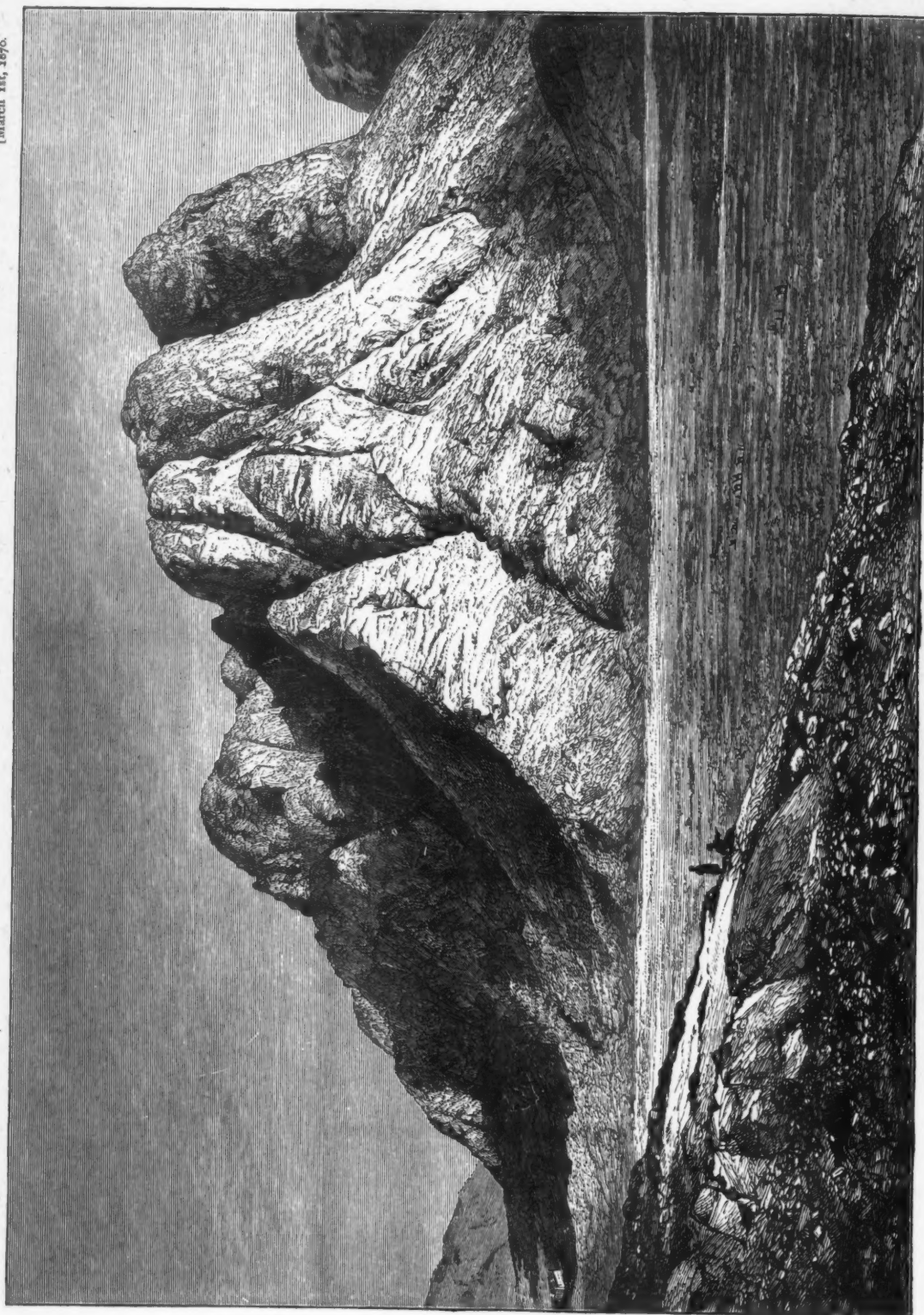
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